

Immigration and ethnocultural diversity: Key results from the 2016 Census

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Today, Statistics Canada is releasing results from the 2016 Census which provide a new national statistical portrait of immigration and ethnocultural diversity in Canada.

On Census Day, 21.9% of the population reported they were or had ever been a landed immigrant or permanent resident in Canada. This proportion is close to the 22.3% recorded during the 1921 Census, the highest level since Confederation.

In 2016, Canada had 1,212,075 new immigrants who had permanently settled in Canada from 2011 to 2016. These recent immigrants represented 3.5% of Canada's total population in 2016.

The majority (60.3%) of these new immigrants were admitted under the economic category, 26.8% were admitted under the family class to join family already in the country, and 11.6% were admitted to Canada as refugees.

For the first time, Africa ranks second, ahead of Europe, as a source continent of recent immigrants to Canada, with a share of 13.4% in 2016. Asia (including the Middle East) remains, however, the top source continent of recent immigrants. In 2016, the majority (61.8%) of newcomers were born in Asia.

Toronto, Vancouver and Montréal are still the place of residence of over half of all immigrants and recent immigrants to Canada. More immigrants are settling in the Prairies and in the Atlantic provinces.

In addition to contributing to the social and economic development of the country, immigrants and their descendants play a significant role in shaping and enriching the ethnic, cultural and linguistic composition of the Canadian population. The 2016 Census results released today show the various facets of diversity in Canada.

More than one in five Canadians are foreign-born

According to the 2016 Census, there were 7,540,830 foreign-born individuals who came to Canada through the immigration process, representing over one-fifth (21.9%) of Canada's total population. This proportion is close to the 22.3% recorded during the 1921 Census, the highest level since Confederation.

The proportion of the foreign-born population was much lower from 1951 to 1991, when it ranged from 14.7% to 16.1%. Since then, this proportion has been continually rising, to 19.8% in the 2006 Census and 20.6% in the 2011 National Household Survey.

This increasing share is due to the large number of immigrants admitted into Canada each year, the gradual rise in the number of deaths and the relatively low fertility levels in Canada.

According to [Statistics Canada's population projections](#), the proportion of Canada's foreign-born population could reach between 24.5% and 30.0% by 2036.

Figure 1: Number and proportion of foreign-born population in Canada, 1871 to 2036

About 6 in 10 recent immigrants were admitted under the economic category

With the 2016 Census, it is now possible to classify immigrants admitted to Canada since 1980 by various [admission categories](#).

In Canada, immigrants are selected based on three main objectives: to enhance and promote economic development; to reunite families; and to fulfill the country's international obligations and uphold its humanitarian tradition.



Among recent immigrants living in Canada in 2016, approximately 6 in 10 were admitted under the economic category, when principal applicants, spouses and dependants were taken into account. Almost half (48.0%) of recent economic immigrants were admitted through the skilled workers program and more than a quarter (27.3%) under the provincial and territorial nominees program.

Furthermore, nearly 3 in 10 recent immigrants were admitted under the family class to join family already in the country, and approximately 1 in 10 recent immigrants were admitted to Canada as refugees.

Refugees accounted for a higher proportion (24.1%) of immigrants admitted from January 1 to May 10, 2016, as a result of the many Syrian refugees who landed during this period.

The situation is different for immigrants who were admitted during the 1980s and were still living in Canada in 2016. A smaller proportion were economic immigrants: 4 in 10 immigrants were admitted under this category, while over 3 in 10 immigrants were sponsored by family, and approximately 2 in 10 immigrants were refugees.

Figure 2: Distribution (in percentage) of immigrants living in Canada, by admission category and year of immigration, 2016

Additional information is available in the infographic "[Gateways to Immigration in Canada](#)" as well as in data products and reference products.

More immigrants are settling in the Prairies

Over the past 15 years, the share of recent immigrants in the Prairie provinces has more than doubled. The percentage of new immigrants living in Alberta rose from 6.9% in 2001 to 17.1% in 2016, a higher share than in British Columbia (14.5%). In Manitoba, the percentage increased from 1.8% to 5.2% during the same period. Saskatchewan's share also grew, from just under 1.0% in 2001 to 4.0% in 2016.

In 2016, the Atlantic provinces were home to 2.3% of all recent immigrants in Canada. Each of the Atlantic provinces received its largest number of new immigrants, which more than doubled the share of recent immigrants in this region in 15 years.

Ontario, Canada's most populous province and the place of residence of most of the country's immigrants, received 39.0% of recent immigrants in 2016. This share decreased from 55.9% in 2001.

British Columbia also saw its share of recent immigrants decrease over the past 15 years, from 19.9% in 2001 to 14.5% in 2016.

In 2016, 17.8% of recent immigrants lived in Quebec, a higher share than in 2006 (17.5%) and in 2001 (13.7%). Overall, Quebec had the second highest number of recent immigrants in 2016, after Ontario.

The territories had the fewest number of recent immigrants. In 2016, 2,100 newcomers, or 0.2% of all recent immigrants, settled in the territories.

Several factors can explain changes in the geographic distribution of new immigrants. For example, certain provinces received a large number of immigrants under the Provincial and Territorial Nominee Program: over 50% of recent immigrants living in Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Yukon were admitted under this program. At the national level, 16.4% of all recent immigrants were admitted under this program.

Moreover, many new immigrants chose to settle in areas with an established community from their home country.

The economic conditions in the various receiving regions undoubtedly played a major role in the geographic distribution of immigrants. According to the Labour Force Survey, Alberta had the largest employment growth from 2011 to 2016 (+7.8%) compared with the national average (+5.0%).

Figure 3: Distribution (in percentage) of recent immigrants in Canada, by provinces and territories, 1981 to 2016

Census metropolitan areas in the Prairies receiving a higher share of recent immigrants

In 2016, the Regina, Winnipeg, Calgary, Saskatoon and Edmonton census metropolitan areas (CMAs) were the place of residence of a share of recent immigrants that was almost twice that of each CMA's share of the total population in Canada. For example, 4.3% of new immigrants settled in Winnipeg, while 2.2% of Canada's total population lived in this CMA.

Nevertheless, Toronto, Vancouver and Montréal, the three most populous CMAs in the country, together are still the place of residence of over half of all immigrants (61.4%) and recent immigrants (56.0%) in Canada. In comparison, just over one-third (35.7%) of Canada's total population lived in these three CMAs.

In 2016, immigrants represented 46.1% of Toronto's population, 40.8% of Vancouver's and 23.4% of Montréal's.

Table 1
Geographic distribution of immigrants and recent immigrants and their proportion within the population of census metropolitan areas, Canada, 2016

	Immigrant population			Recent immigrants (2011 to 2016)		
	number	distribution ¹ (%)	proportion ² (%)	number	distribution ¹ (%)	proportion ² (%)
Canada	7,540,830	100.0	21.9	1,212,075	100.0	3.5
Toronto	2,705,550	35.9	46.1	356,930	29.4	6.1
Montréal	936,305	12.4	23.4	179,270	14.8	4.5
Vancouver	989,545	13.1	40.8	142,535	11.8	5.9
Calgary	404,700	5.4	29.4	93,255	7.7	6.8
Ottawa–Gatineau	255,800	3.4	19.7	37,890	3.1	2.9
Edmonton	308,610	4.1	23.8	78,520	6.5	6.1
Québec	44,550	0.6	5.7	13,445	1.1	1.7
Winnipeg	181,965	2.4	23.9	52,460	4.3	6.9
Hamilton	177,075	2.3	24.1	17,420	1.4	2.4
Kitchener–Cambridge–Waterloo	118,615	1.6	23.0	13,975	1.2	2.7
London	94,690	1.3	19.5	11,955	1.0	2.5
Halifax	37,210	0.5	9.4	9,420	0.8	2.4
St. Catharines–Niagara	67,190	0.9	16.9	4,990	0.4	1.3
Oshawa	67,570	0.9	18.0	4,545	0.4	1.2
Victoria	65,610	0.9	18.3	7,690	0.6	2.1
Windsor	74,495	1.0	22.9	10,105	0.8	3.1
Saskatoon	45,155	0.6	15.6	18,585	1.5	6.4
Regina	36,910	0.5	15.9	16,195	1.3	7.0
Sherbrooke	14,550	0.2	7.1	3,940	0.3	1.9
St. John's	8,135	0.1	4.0	2,685	0.2	1.3
Barrie	26,140	0.3	13.4	2,040	0.2	1.0
Kelowna	26,455	0.4	13.9	2,995	0.2	1.6
Abbotsford–Mission	43,780	0.6	24.8	5,880	0.5	3.3
Greater Sudbury	9,360	0.1	5.8	1,000	0.1	0.6
Saguenay	2,040	0.0	1.3	405	0.0	0.3
Kingston	18,400	0.2	11.8	1,725	0.1	1.1
Trois-Rivières	4,815	0.1	3.2	1,340	0.1	0.9
Guelph	30,880	0.4	20.6	3,680	0.3	2.5
Moncton	7,955	0.1	5.6	2,840	0.2	2.0
Brantford	16,465	0.2	12.5	1,105	0.1	0.8
Saint John	6,645	0.1	5.4	1,995	0.2	1.6
Thunder Bay	10,490	0.1	8.8	695	0.1	0.6
Peterborough	10,060	0.1	8.5	745	0.1	0.6
Lethbridge	15,365	0.2	13.5	3,405	0.3	3.0
Belleville	7,365	0.1	7.3	550	0.0	0.5
Non-CMA	670,385	8.9	6.7	105,865	8.7	1.1

1. The distribution shows the percentage breakdown of the immigrant population (or recent immigrants) in Canada by census metropolitan area.

2. The proportion shows the percentage of immigrants (or recent immigrants) in a given geographical area compared to the total population living in this same geographical area.

Source(s): Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016.

For the first time, Africa accounts for the second largest source continent of recent immigrants

In 2016, 13.4% of recent immigrants were born in Africa, a four-fold increase from the 1971 Census (3.2%). Africa thus ranked second, ahead of Europe, as a source continent of recent immigrants to Canada.

Nigeria, Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Cameroon were the top five countries of birth of recent African-born immigrants in 2016.

As a result of shifts in Canada's immigration policies and various international events relating to movements of migrants and refugees, the percentage of recent immigrants born in Europe has decreased from one census to the next, falling from 61.6% in 1971 to 16.1% in 2006 and to 11.6% in 2016.

Asia (including the Middle East) remained the top source continent of recent immigrants. The majority (61.8%) of newcomers to Canada from 2011 to 2016 were born in Asia. This is a slightly higher proportion than was observed in the 2006 Census (58.3%) and in the 2011 National Household Survey (56.9%).

Asian countries accounted for 7 of the top 10 countries of birth of recent immigrants in 2016: the Philippines, India, China, Iran, Pakistan, Syria and South Korea.

Table 2
Top 10 countries of birth of recent immigrants, Canada, 2016

	number	%
Recent immigrants	1,212,075	100.0
Philippines	188,805	15.6
India	147,190	12.1
China	129,020	10.6
Iran	42,070	3.5
Pakistan	41,480	3.4
United States	33,060	2.7
Syria	29,945	2.5
United Kingdom	24,445	2.0
France	24,155	2.0
South Korea	21,710	1.8
Other countries	530,195	43.7

Source(s): Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016.

Newcomers from the Americas and Oceania represented 12.6% and 0.7%, respectively, of recent immigrants to Canada.

Almost half of the foreign-born population is from Asia

Changes in the main source countries of immigrants have transformed the overall portrait of Canada's foreign-born population. In 2016, almost half (48.1%) of the foreign-born population was born in Asia (including the Middle East), while a lower proportion (27.7%) was born in Europe.

Furthermore, African-born immigrants represented a growing share of the foreign-born population, increasing from 1.4% in the 1971 Census to 8.5% in the 2016 Census.

In 1871, in the first census held after Confederation, the foreign-born population was mainly from the British Isles (83.6%).

One hundred years later, the 1971 Census showed that individuals born in the British Isles still accounted for the largest group of foreign-born population, but their share had decreased significantly to 29.5%. The majority of the foreign-born population were from other European countries and the United States, while 10.9% of foreign-born were from other parts of the world.

Current immigration trends—if they continue—and the aging of established cohorts of immigrants mean that from 55.7% to 57.9% of all immigrants would be born in Asia by 2036, and from 15.4% to 17.8% would be born in Europe. The proportion of immigrants born in Africa is projected to increase to between 11.0% and 11.9% in 2036.

Figure 4: Distribution of foreign-born population, by region of birth, Canada, 1871 to 2036

More information on recent and past trends with regard to immigration to Canada is available in the video "[Welcome to Canada: 150 Years of Immigration](#)" and in the infographic "[Immigrant population in Canada](#)", as well as in various immigration data products.

Two in five Canadian children have an immigrant background

[First- and second-generation](#) children of immigrants contribute to the renewal of the population and to the diversity of Canada's population.

According to the 2016 Census, almost 2.2 million children under the age of 15 were foreign-born (first generation) or had at least one foreign-born parent (second generation), representing 37.5% of all Canadian children. This is an increase from 2011, when this proportion was 34.6%. This population of children with an immigrant background could continue to grow and could represent from 39.3% to 49.1% of children under the age of 15 by 2036.

In 2016, the majority (74.0%) of these first- or second-generation children were from countries of ancestry in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and Bermuda, Central and South America.

For more information, please see the document entitled "[Children with an immigrant background: Bridging cultures](#)" from the *Census in Brief* series.

The vast majority of immigrants report being able to conduct a conversation in English or French

The language composition of immigrants has changed over the past 100 years. The percentage of immigrants with English or French as a [mother tongue](#) decreased from 71.2% in 1921 to 27.5% in 2016, mirroring changes in the source countries of immigrants over the same period. Overall, statistics are presented on about 200 languages for the 2016 Census.

English and French remain the languages of convergence and integration into Canadian society. In 2016, the vast majority of the 7.5 million immigrants (93.2%) were able to conduct a conversation in English or in French. This means that only 6.8% of immigrants reported not being able to conduct a conversation either in English or in French.

More detailed analyses of immigrants and language are available in the document "[Linguistic integration of immigrants and official language populations in Canada](#)" in the *Census in Brief* series.

Over 250 ethnic origins

Past and recent sources of immigration have strongly influenced the current ethnic and cultural make-up of Canada's population.

Many [ethnic origins](#) were reported in the 2016 Census. The list of origins includes different groups associated with Aboriginal peoples. It also includes European groups that first settled in Canada, as well as various groups that subsequently settled in this country. Overall, statistics are available for over 250 ethnic origins.

More detailed analyses are included in the document on "[Ethnic and cultural origins of Canadians: Portrait of a rich heritage](#)" from the *Census in Brief* series.

Growth of the visible minority population

The increase in the number of immigrants from non-European countries, as well as their children and grandchildren born in Canada, has contributed to the growth of the visible minority population in Canada.

In 2016, 7,674,580 individuals were identified as belonging to the [visible minority](#) population as defined by the *Employment Equity Act*. They represented more than one-fifth (22.3%) of Canada's population. Of this number, 3 in 10 were born in Canada.

The visible minority population has grown steadily since the 1981 Census, when data for the four Employment Equity groups (women, Aboriginal peoples, visible minorities and persons with disabilities) were first derived. At that time, the 1.1 million people belonging to a visible minority represented 4.7% of the total Canadian population.

If current trends continue, the visible minority population would continue to grow and could represent between 31.2% and 35.9% of the Canadian population by 2036.

Figure 5: Number and proportion of visible minority population in Canada, 1981 to 2036

The visible minority population is made up of a number of groups, which themselves are diversified in many respects.

South Asians, Chinese and Blacks were the three largest visible minority groups, each with a population exceeding one million.

According to the 2016 Census, 1,924,635 people reported being South Asian, representing one-quarter (25.1%) of the visible minority population and 5.6% of the entire Canadian population.

Chinese was the second largest visible minority group, with 1,577,060 individuals, representing 20.5% of the visible minority population.

The Black population in Canada surpassed the one-million mark for the first time in 2016. This visible minority group, the third largest in terms of number, comprised 1,198,540 individuals (15.6% of the visible minority population) in 2016, compared with 945,670 in 2011.

The fourth and fifth largest visible minority groups, Filipinos and Arabs, almost doubled their numbers in 10 years and had the highest growth rates among visible minority groups from 2006 to 2016.

They were followed by Latin Americans, Southeast Asians, West Asians, Koreans and Japanese.

Additional information on Canada's visible minority population is available in the [2016 Census data products](#).

Note to readers

*The **foreign-born population** (or immigrant population) is defined in the 2016 Census as persons who are, or who have been, landed immigrants or permanent residents in Canada. Such persons have been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. Immigrants who have obtained Canadian citizenship by naturalization are included in this group.*

In this Daily article, the foreign-born population excludes non-permanent residents (i.e., persons in Canada who have a work or study permit or who are refugee claimants). The foreign-born population also excludes persons born outside Canada who are Canadian citizens by birth. The latter are considered part of the Canadian born or non-immigrant population.

***Recent immigrant** refers to an immigrant who first obtained his or her landed immigrant or permanent resident status in the five years prior to a given census. In the 2016 Census, the period is from January 1, 2011 to May 10, 2016.*

2016 Census of Population products and releases

Today, Statistics Canada is releasing the fifth series of results from the 2016 Census of Population. New data are available on immigration, admission categories, citizenship, place of birth, generation status, knowledge of non-official languages, ethnic origin and visible minorities.

The results of the 2016 Census show to what extent the Canadian population continues to diversify through immigration. These data can be useful in gaining a better understanding of how immigrants and their children integrate into Canadian society. They provide information that has implications for many services and programs, such as employment, education, citizenship, health and housing.

The results on [Aboriginal people](#) and [housing](#) are also being released today.

Several 2016 Census products are also available today on the [Census Program](#) web module. This module has been designed to provide easy access to census data, free of charge. Information is organized into broad categories, including analytical products, data products, reference materials, geography and a video centre.

[Analytical products](#) include three articles from the *Census in Brief* series. They provide analyses on current population issues, including ones relevant from a public policy perspective. The first article focuses on children with an immigrant background, who act as a bridge between cultures. The second article deals with the linguistic integration of immigrants and official language populations, while the third article features information on the ethnic and cultural origins of Canadians.

[Data products](#) include immigration and ethnocultural diversity results for a wide range of standard geographic areas, available through the [Census Profile](#), [Data tables](#) and [Highlight tables](#).

In addition, the [Focus on Geography Series](#) provides data and highlights on key topics found in this Daily release and in the *Census in Brief* articles at various levels of geography.

[Reference materials](#) contain information to help understand census data. They include the [Guide to the Census of Population, 2016](#), which summarizes key aspects of the census, as well as response rates and other data quality information. They also include the [Dictionary, Census of Population, 2016](#), which defines census concepts and variables, and the [Visible Minority and Population Group Reference Guide](#), the [Place of Birth, Generation Status, Citizenship and Immigration Reference Guide](#) and the [Ethnic Origin Reference Guide](#), which explain census concepts and changes made to the 2016 Census. These reference guides also includes information about data quality and historical comparability, and comparisons with other data sources. Both the [Dictionary](#) and the [Guide to the Census of Population](#) are updated with additional information throughout the release cycle.

Geography-related 2016 Census Program products and services can be found under [Geography](#). This includes [GeoSearch](#), an interactive mapping tool, for various standard geographic areas.

A brief historical portrait of the changes in the source countries of immigrants to Canada can be found in the [Video centre](#).

Two infographics are also available: [Immigrant population in Canada](#) shows some of the key findings, particularly on the place of birth of immigrants and recent immigrants in Canada. The second infographic, [Gateways to Immigration in Canada](#), shows the three main admission categories under which immigrants have entered Canada since 1980.

The public is also invited to [chat with our experts](#) about this release on Friday October 27, 2017 from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m., Eastern Time.

Over the coming months, Statistics Canada will continue to release results from the 2016 Census of Population, and provide an even more comprehensive picture of the Canadian population. Please see the [2016 Census Program release schedule](#) to find out when data and analysis on the different topics will be released throughout 2017 and consult regularly the [Census Program](#) web module for the release of additional products.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [3901](#).

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca).